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[H.R. 615, Department of Homeland Security Interoperable Communications Act \(Senate amendment\)](#)

FLOOR SITUATION

On Tuesday, June 23, 2015, the House will consider the Senate amendment to [H.R. 615](#), *the Department of Homeland Security Interoperable Communications Act*, under suspension of the rules. The House passed H.R. 615 by a vote of [379 to 0](#) on February 2, 2015. The Senate passed the bill with an amendment by unanimous consent on June 11, 2015.

SUMMARY

H.R. 615 requires the Under Secretary for Management (USM) of the Department of Homeland Security to develop a strategy for achieving and maintaining interoperable communications capabilities among the components of the Department, and to report on the status of the strategy's implementation.

The Senate amendment makes the following changes to the House-passed bill:¹

- Changes the definition of interoperability to conform with the definition in 6 U.S.C. Section 194(g)(1);
- requires the strategy outlined by the bill to be submitted to Congress no later than 180 days after enactment instead of 120 days;
- makes the report required in Section 5 of the act to be required 100 days after the strategy is submitted, instead of 220 days after enactment;
- requires the report to be submitted every other year following the submission of the first report, and ending the report after six years; and,
- clarifies that the strategy and required reports pertain only to DHS and its components.

Click [here](#) for the Legislative Digest on the House-passed version of the bill.

BACKGROUND

¹ [Senate Report 114-53](#) at 2.

The Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Inspector General (IG) issued a report in 2012 entitled [DHS’s Oversight of Interoperable Communications](#). The report noted that, since 2003, DHS components had spent \$430 million on equipment, infrastructure, and resources to meet the Department’s communications requirements.² However, the IG noted that “DHS personnel do not have reliable interoperable communications for daily operations, planned events, and emergencies.”³ The IG concluded that the primary reason was that DHS “did not provide effective oversight to ensure that its components achieved Department-wide interoperable communications.”⁴ H.R. 615 is designed to address the interoperability issues identified in the IG’s report.

COST

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) [previously estimated](#) that implementing nearly identical legislation would not significantly affect spending by DHS.

STAFF CONTACT

For questions or further information please contact [Jerry White](#) with the House Republican Policy Committee by email or at 5-0190.

² See GAO Report—“[DHS’s Oversight of Interoperable Communications](#),” November 2012 at 2.

³ Id. at 3.

⁴ Id.